EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH BAND INSIDERS

SPECIAL EDITION

FEATURING A CRITICAL REVIEW OF 'TRESPASS'

MUSIC LEGENDS

THE ROCK ICONS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

THE INSIDE STORY OF ROCK'S GREATEST NAMES

GENESIS

THE EARLY YEARS

FROM THE FORMATION OF THE BAND TO 1970'S 'TRESPASS'

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Contents

INTRODUCTION 5

Chapter 1

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION 7

Chapter 2

TRESPASS 19

INTRODUCTION

Genesis famously worked their way into the public eye with their outlandish stage act and unique sound. After years of exhaustive touring Genesis hit it big in the early seventies with albums such as *Foxtrot* and *Selling England by the Pound*. Throughout line-up changes they remained at the forefront of the progressive rock scene for decades and are one of the genres best-loved and most distinctive acts. Whilst for many the name Genesis conjours up images of Peter Gabriel's outlandish onstage looks, there is far more to the tale of the band's formation as we discover in this issue.

'We started in 1966 when we were still at school – four of us; Tony Banks, Anthony Phillips, Michael Rutherford and me.'

– Peter Gabriel

Chapter 1

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

The roots of Genesis sprang from Charterhouse, the famous public school protectively nestled in the heart of the English stockbroker belt at Godalming in Surrey. Charterhouse was, and still is, one of the leading schools in England.

For the benefit of overseas readers, the term 'public' school in England is applied to what would normally be termed 'private' schools in most other countries. Technically of course the term is correct. Charterhouse is a public school in the sense that it is open to the public – but only to those members of the public with the ability to pay the generous annual fees. In the early sixties Charterhouse still retained an echo of the conservative values which had shaped the British Empire and it was to this the privileged bastion of

establishment England that the founder members of the band repaired to receive the benefits of a genteel education. From this comfortable enclosed world pupils were generally expected to progress to become notables in the city or the army. Rock 'n' roll was the last thing on the syllabus of this most English of institutions; but for Peter Gabriel, Tony Banks, Michael Rutherford and Anthony Philips Charterhouse was to provide an unexpectedly supportive nursery for a peculiarly English brand of music.

Rock music, of course, was hardly considered a suitable career for the young gentlemen being raised in the rarefied atmosphere of Charterhouse, however by 1965 the waves of excitement created by the Beatles had permeated every level of English society and even Charterhouse contained its fair share of embryonic musicians who formed nascent pop groups, each vying, in true competitive public school tradition, for the position of top pop band in the school.

In 1966, it was widely agreed that Anon, a group comprising Peter Gabriel (lead vocalist and flautist), Anthony Phillips (lead guitar), Tony Banks (piano), Mike Rutherford (bass guitar) and Rob Tyrrell (drums), very definitely deserved this coveted status. Anon had in fact seen themselves as songwriters rather than musicians and didn't particularly want to be recognised as artists in their own right – hence the name – but the members soon realised that if they were going to get their message across, it was inevitable that at some stage they would have to play the music as well. A rough tape of Anon material was duly created using the most basic of facilities at school and by this lucky twist of fate a unique musical combination was born.

The rarefied atmosphere of a leading public school was not exactly the first choice for a band seeking contacts in the egalitarian world of rock 'n' roll, but against all odds however there was already a Charterhouse man with some influence in the music business. This was of course the now notorious Jonathan King. Back in the sixties King was viewed as a buffoonish champion of tasteless pap. His own

hit singles were mindless novelty numbers and his musical taste ran the gamut from the Bee Gees to the... er Bee Gees. Since those heady days when the world was naïve and innocent, Jonathan King has experienced a very public and spectacular fall from grace which saw him spend a long time in prison for sex offences against young men. Back then society was much less aware of the dangers that lurked in the hearts of men like King and it was to this seemingly normal, if slightly tedious, man that five young men from his old school turned to for help.

Jonathan King was then not just the king of bubblegum music, he was a publisher, composer and performer who was also in the process of establishing the successful English label UK records. King was not overly excited by the Anon tape but he was at least interested. There was clearly something there, since it was not just his affinity with the background of its creators that led him to the realisation that Anon had genuine potential. Peter Gabriel later explained the background to *Melody Maker*: 'We started in 1966 when we were still at school – four of us; Tony Banks, Anthony Phillips, Michael Rutherford and me. We wanted to be songwriters rather than performers, but in order to get the songs on tape, we started to play together. We sent a tape to various people in the music industry, most of whom either lost it or returned it, but one of the recipients who did listen to it was Jonathan King; he did criticise it, but then paid out the mighty sum of £10 to finance another demo recording session, the results of which he liked a lot better.'

It was obvious even from the rough demo that there was something unique in the musical mix. The band evidently already had the compositional skills that later made Genesis into stars. It was at King's instigation that Anon changed their name to Genesis. He also insisted that they substitute the luckless Rob Tyrell for a new drummer – Chris Stewart. Chris played on the first two singles before he too left Genesis in late-1967 and was in turn replaced by John Silver. Silver worked with the band for just over a year

taking in the recording of the first album before leaving to study at an American university. Much later, in an interview with Chris Welch, Peter Gabriel recalled some of the band's early struggles: 'There were four of us songwriters, but our songwriting was marked by a tremendous lack of success. We were writing straight songs (and) I think we had one cover version that was recorded by Rita Pavone's brother. We tried to get a band together as a vehicle for our songwriting. And that also failed.'

In an interview with Richard Cromelin published in 1974 Gabriel later described Charterhouse School in some fairly aggressive language but despite his reservations, it was clear that even at the height of his fame with the band Peter still regretted his lack of success as an anonymous writer. Even on the eve of the release of *The Lamb* it seemed that the Pavone incident still rankled, 'Charterhouse is a repressive, middle-class institution but at the time we recorded there we thought these masterpieces were ready to be recorded by thousands of No. 1 recording stars, and so we made a tape which was duly sent around most of Tin Pan Alley, and duly returned. We had only ever had that one song covered by Rita Pavone's brother in Italy, but it was still a cause of great excitement.'

Unusually for a musician Peter Gabriel always had an active interest in the commercial side of the music industry, an interest that endures to this day. From the outset Peter was highly attentive to those parts of the business which are all too often ignored by musicians intent only on pursuing their art. It was Gabriel's drive, enthusiasm and intelligence coupled with an innate understanding of the mechanics of the business which got the whole Genesis project off the ground: 'It's very tough for a band that's just starting out especially with equipment and a PA. To get our very basic instruments we had to borrow money from family and friends. It was only when we signed with Charisma that we really got decent stuff. We started off with home made cabinets and guitars that were borrowed!'

The young Gabriel's business skills deserted him however when faced with the enthusiastic figure of Jonathan King who had sensed a hit in the making. For the benefit of *Melody Maker* readers Peter recalled the alarming episode in which King took full advantage of the naïve young men before him: 'We were still thinking of ourselves as songwriters at this time, but before we knew what was happening, contracts were produced – ten years – and, of course, over a cup of tea and a chat, they were signed willingly. So there we were, signed up to Jonathan's publishing company, which leased recordings to Decca. Our parents were pretty horrified when they learned what we'd done, but fortunately we were all minors, so the contract was void.'

It was fortunate indeed for the fledgling Genesis that their tender years spared them from the onerous obligations imposed by a ten-year contract with King. It was a frequent event in the sixties for musicians with no legal advice to sign contracts that frequently returned to haunt their careers – the Beatles, Bowie and Hendrix all suffered as a result. It was just as well for Genesis that they were part of the solid unflappable world of middle England, and the band's sensible and well informed parents were easily able to obtain the proper legal advice, which saw the original ten-year contract rendered void. Undeterred by all of this, the youngsters were still very keen to work with King, so the parents reluctantly relented, although only allowing their charges to enter into a more modest and prudent one-year deal.

With the recent addition of schoolmate Chris Stewart on drums, Genesis recorded *The Silent Sun* as their first single in late 1967. Peter Gabriel again takes up the story: 'So then we entered a legal contract, supported by parents' signatures, for one year. Well, the first thing we recorded was a single, *Silent Sun*, which didn't make it.'

The single was released in February 1968 and was later described by the band as a 'Bee Gees pastiche' which was deliberately constructed in this way in order to help win King's approval. The record may well have obtained King's favour but found almost none with the British

‘We had a lean year at first, when I was trying to sell us to everyone. We made a demo tape and then I kept pestering people with visits and phone calls.’

– Mike Rutherford

record buying public despite the fact that the single was released on the prestigious Decca Records label, then also home to the Rolling Stones. Even such illustrious company did not help to lift sales and with only a few hundred copies sold the single was not considered a commercial success. Neither was the follow-up *A Winter's Tale*, released just three months later in May 1968, it also disappeared without much fanfare, as Peter Gabriel recalled, 'For our second attempt we were told that we would be accorded the legendary Decca "A-one" promotion treatment. But that single, *A Winter's Tale* didn't get anywhere either. Nor did our album, which appeared in 1969.'

Undaunted by the lack of singles chart action from either release, King decided that Genesis might best be showcased on a full album. After replacing Chris Stewart with John Silver on drums, King encouraged the band to compose and record an album's worth of songs loosely related to passages from the Bible. That album, entitled *From Genesis to Revelation* was totally under the control and direction of Jonathan King who, as a songwriter, performer and producer, was then enjoying a hit single with the terminally awful *Everyone's Gone to the Moon*. It was not the most auspicious of omens. *From Genesis to Revelation* was cut in August 1968, while the boys were on school holidays. Later it was unexpectedly overdubbed with strings, much to the band's annoyance.

Despite their dissatisfaction with these proceedings Genesis had at least got further than most bands by actually succeeding in having their records distributed by a major label and recording their first album. With King resolutely at the helm the band had recorded a series of songs reflective of the light pop style of the Bee Gees, of whom King was very fond indeed. King then assembled the resulting tracks into a pseudo-concept album, slapping unnecessary and highly intrusive string arrangements on top of songs which might otherwise have stood a chance of succeeding. The ill-advised religious connotations of the album title caused a series of highly unwelcome complications in the market place, as record store owners and buyers

alike naturally assumed the album to be a collection of songs of worship. Perhaps understandably the album flopped terribly, and the band, feeling increasingly manipulated by King, sensibly terminated the relationship.

Today, King is infamous for much more serious crimes, but among the band and its fans it was his constant bragging over how he had named Genesis coupled with his relentless efforts to promote an album the band now found embarrassing, that first made King an object of ridicule. The reluctance of the band to have this particular product associated with their later career is certainly justified in the light of what came after. In fact that first album with Jonathan King in 1968 bears almost no resemblance to the group Genesis would later become. The gulf is so great that in later years the group disowned the album altogether and insisted that *Trespass* should be treated as the first Genesis album. 'We tried to write some structured songs in those days,' recalled Peter Gabriel, 'but the publishers didn't like them at all. This was before we went on the road, and we were playing for our own pleasure. I suppose our ideas were fairly idealised and a bit over romantic. Initially the band was a vehicle for writing and it developed as we gained experience. When we eventually started out playing live we began with a small, hardcore of followers, who gave us a good welcome wherever we went.'

The first Genesis gigs may have been warmly received but the first Genesis album was a disaster. Under King's guidance the album was sequenced together in the manner of a concept album with no gaps in between the tracks. The music itself is a million miles away from what Genesis were producing just two years later. It is important to note in mitigation however that, in 1968, when the *From Genesis to Revelation* album was recorded, the band members ranged from in age from sixteen to eighteen, they had absolutely no studio recording experience, and none of them at the time considered themselves proficient musicians. Nonetheless, amidst the wreckage there were some very good tracks, and it was obvious that Genesis already had

an ear for melody, even in that embryonic stage. The whole *From Genesis to Revelation* album is cloaked in the first inklings of the romantic melodies and images which would later be fully developed on *Trespass*. The standout track on the album is of course, *In the Wilderness* which is still a very fine song – despite the intrusive strings. As if to finally confound its slim chances of success, *From Genesis to Revelation* was first issued in March 1969 in a black sleeve with its title scribed in biblically inspired gothic script on the top left-hand side. With little else to go by, record shops stacked the LP in their religious section and it was consequently impossible to find. The initial sales tally was an embarrassing 649 copies.

As a result of these confusing attempts to position the band in the marketplace, the album's release garnered only minimal press coverage. Barbara Charone at *NME* was destined to become a major figure on the Genesis landscape but in 1969 even she was untouched by the limited exposure received by the release of the *From Genesis to Revelation* album. Charone's first critical look at the work was for an *NME* feature published in 1972, by which time a great deal of water had passed under the bridge. She was sufficiently under the spell of Genesis to find a great deal which was positive even in the abandoned 'first' album:

'Enter bubblegum guru Jonathan King, veteran teen king producer. An unlikely choice but valid, save for the fact that he gave them their first piece of vinyl, *From Genesis to Revelation*, and a group name. The album sounds more like a Moody Blues/Procul Harum synthesis than avant garde funk but maintained its own infectious aura that promised good things for the future. The lyrics were slightly obscure, stained with sixties idealism. The music was good but hesitant, afraid to take chances.'

Understandably there is very little in the way of press coverage from the early days of the band. Once Genesis had made their mark on the rock scene a number of journals that had been completely unaware of the band in their first incarnation retrospectively went back to the

beginnings of the band to gain an understanding of the roots of the Genesis phenomenon.

Music Scene magazine published a highly detailed review in June 1974 which gave the full retrospective treatment to the *From Genesis to Revelation* album. Once again the tone was very positive given the limitations of the material:

'You can still hear the results of those early days on their first album *From Genesis to Revelation* for Decca, which followed their discovery by the infamous (or was he outrageous then?) Jonathan King. The album exhibits a side of the band which might have led them along the path of another Kingly group, the Hedgehoppers, i.e. dignified obscurity and it's a good pointer to where the group was at, just out of Charterhouse public school and coyly baring their soul to a commercial world. Their attitude was light hearted enough not to be too important, general enough to be forgotten and romantic enough to show their insecurity, while at the same time one felt they were holding to some moral creed. It shows in the lyrics:

'Am I very wrong
To hide behind the glare of an open minded stare
Am I very wrong
To wander in the fear of a never ending lie
Am I very wrong
To try to close my ears to the sound they play so loud
Am I very wrong
The happiness machine is trying hard to sing my song'

Note the lack of a question mark hinting perhaps that the 'question' is more of a statement. Basically the album is downbeat, with plenty of use of echo, for which incidentally Gabriel employs a smooth, rich voice instead of that rather hoarse desperation he was to become so fond of later. On the production side King counterbalanced their approach with a jaunty, mocking brass section at strategic points as if heralding the lads (he was at the same school and discovered them on a return visit there) to the world of selling

and change. It's a typically cynical approach for the time. The band's response can be found in *In Hiding*:

'Pick me up, put me down
push me in, turn me round
switch me on, let me go
I have a mind of my own'

Looked at in total, the album reminds the listener of a day in the country, sunny, with cotton-wool clouds chasing across a pale blue sky with a cool enough breeze blowing to make you want to walk and talk with some energy. Yes, it's as nicely corny as that. Unhappily, nobody in the group was reportedly much pleased with those tracks by last year, perhaps because of commercial considerations, perhaps because the present always is more important and it's easy to decry the past.

Chapter 2

TRESPASS

The road to fame and stardom is a notoriously difficult one, which is probably just as well otherwise it would possibly be the most crowded thoroughfare on earth. A road that has tempted countless thousands to set out upon it, only a microscopically small number have ever emerged into the spotlight of success. The members of Genesis may well have had many advantages during their comfortable early years but the music business is a great leveller and things in their first three years of professional life had not been easy. Peter Gabriel later recalled his frustrations at this difficult juncture for Barbara Charone and *NME*: 'By this time, we were a group, though still at school struggling with A Levels, but when we left to become professional, we managed to get a fair amount of financial help

from friends and were able to get the basic equipment like amps and an organ. Once we went on the road, however, we found how much money you need to keep running, and we couldn't get management or anybody willing to take us on with the debts we owed. We began, very desperately, to hunt around the music world, but it was very discouraging listening to people promise you the world and then never getting in touch again. We went to one particular famous agency, and they just told us to give up – without even listening to our music… and there were so many with the same kind of attitude.'

From the start Genesis' approach to the music business was unorthodox. In conventional rock star terms their whole attitude appeared hopelessly middle class and terminally eccentric. As Mike Rutherford later explained: 'We didn't know how to set up the equipment for a gig and we used to travel around with a picnic basket containing hard-boiled eggs, pots of tea and scones that we set up in the dressing rooms. The other bands were frankly amazed. But we were very fond of tea'. Not surprisingly the band found the world of dingy dressing rooms something of a grind. 'We had a lean year at first,' remembered Gabriel, 'when I was trying to sell us to everyone. We made a demo tape and then I kept pestering people with visits and phone calls.'

Eventually the band, with the help of their well-heeled parents, secured themselves a cottage in the country to which they invited interested parties to watch them rehearse. Gabriel recalled the number of agents and managers who suffered 'break downs' on their way from London into the country and were therefore unable to make it. There was always the Jonathan King connection, which they knew they could fall back on if they really had to, and although King had expressed his willingness to keep working with the band, Genesis knew they needed strong management and were keen to explore other musical avenues. They originally attempted to do this by the simple expedient of picking out a band they all admired and

then tracking down their agent and management in an attempt to interest them in Genesis. Then they acquired a friend who was 'into the art of selling' and who began hustling on their behalf. According to Peter Gabriel 'At first no-one was interested. They all said, "Come and see us again in six months time", which is a no basically.'

Eventually Genesis telephoned Tony Stratton-Smith's office. Although he'd never heard the band he turned them down because of the large amount of commitments he'd already taken on in what was still a fledgling label. Fortunately for Genesis producer John Anthony and the group Rare Bird together persuaded Stratton-Smith to see Genesis play at Ronnie Scott's. He came along, liked them, and signed them up to Charisma. 'Basically the quality you need to sell a group is perseverance,' said Gabriel. 'There are so many groups that come up to London green and accept deals that they'd be better off out of. We went flogging our wares around the business, and most people turned us down. The Moody Blues showed an interest, and then we met Strat (Tony Stratton-Smith). There was a time when we heard of an American group called Genesis, and we changed our name to Revelation. We then heard they had disintegrated and switched back to Genesis.'

Mercifully the Jonathan King relationship only lasted the twelve months specified in the contract. Genesis then signed a new record deal with Charisma in 1970. The label was owned by the flamboyant Tony Stratton-Smith, which was to cause endless confusion with the unrelated Tony Smith who became the band's manager in 1971. For the sake of the sanity of all concerned Stratton-Smith was invariably referred to as Strat.

By this time drummer Chris Stewart had been duly replaced by John Mayhew, who plays on the *Trespass* album and it was with this new line-up that the group left London to live in the country cottage where they evolved the rudiments of the early songs and structures that developed into their own unique style of progressive rock music.

Genesis has never sought to conceal the huge influence the first King Crimson album had upon them, although it is a great tribute to the skill and originality of Genesis from the very outset that nothing that is identifiable in musical terms is obviously borrowed from the *In the Court of the Crimson King* album.

In later years, secure in their own status as world beaters, Genesis were able to pay homage to King Crimson with the short pipe organ passage on *Duke* which directly harked back to the massive influence *In the Court of the Crimson King* had wielded in the early days of *Trespass*. As the new album slowly took shape, an entirely different type of work, which would be completely unrecognisable to the gallant 649 that had bought *From Genesis to Revelation*, began to evolve. The new album was of course *Trespass* and it was here that the band began to establish a more ethereal/romantic musical quality, which could nonetheless give way to sublime rocky passages as the mood dictated. *Trespass* was the only Genesis album to feature drummer John Mayhew and as the sessions drew to a close both he and founder member Anthony Philips were about to depart the fold.

Zig Zag magazine covered the events, which in May 1971 were then recent history, in the first ever in-depth piece about the band. Peter Gabriel had yet to grow weary of the attentions of the press and was clearly still enjoying the novelty of being in the spotlight. He gave the piece his full attention and carefully set out the background to his version of the Genesis story in great depth: 'Eventually Rare Bird happened to see us and went back and enthused to Tony Stratton-Smith of Charisma. He got John Anthony (who later produced their album) to come and see us, and things suddenly began to pick up. Within a few weeks we had half a dozen offers – including Island, Threshold and the re-appearing Jonathan King – but we eventually signed with Charisma. We did the country cottage bit from October 1969 until February 1970, and then recorded our *Trespass* album, after which Anthony our guitarist left, and that was the biggest blow

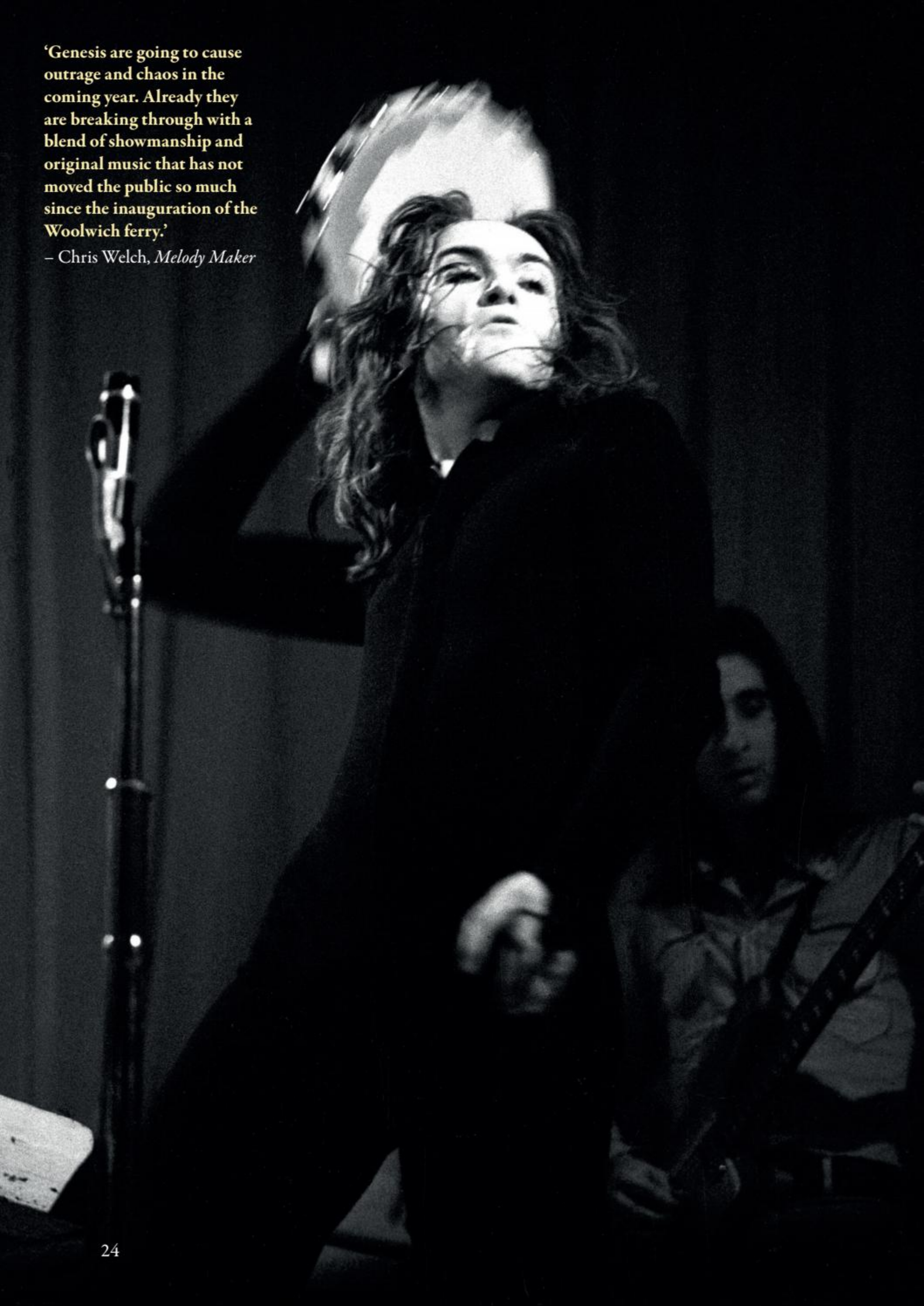
we've yet suffered. He didn't like the road, felt too nervous playing in front of people, and he thought that playing the same numbers over and over again, night after night, was causing it to stagnate. But you just don't get the opportunity to keep changing your repertoire when you're in our position. The comparison between Decca and Charisma is amazing; Charisma is like a family, but we used to go to Decca, give our name at the door, and the man at the desk would phone up and say, "the Janitors are here to see you". Our sales figures seemed to fluctuate rapidly too – we'd be told a record had sold 1000 one week, then 2000 the next week and so on; then later they'd say it had sold a total of 649. They eventually caught on to the way that other labels like Island were scooping all the sales and we got a letter from them saying "we now have an artists relations manager – come along and chat to him whenever you want", which seemed a bit like waving the flag when the ship's sinking.'

This childlike innocence was both a blessing and obstacle in seeking the big time. Fairytale visions added romantic feelings and an aura of fantasy to the music, while a naive understanding of jive-talking promoters prevented success from happening too quickly. 'A Genesis cult just grew,' Peter says mysteriously. 'If our success had happened a lot quicker people would have bothered checking out what we were about. As it happened ours was a slow rise. Possibly there's less excitement due to the slow nature of success. The evolution,' Peter says with a confident nod, 'has been gradual. We'd have never been like we are if we'd been in other bands and involved in the music business before we met,' says Michael Rutherford. 'Before we knew anything at all about the music business or even spoke to any record companies, we had established the band's direction. It's good to be removed from the business. People tell us to get out more and see people but it's better to do it on your own. Then if you hit on something, it doesn't seem ripped off.'

◊

'Genesis are going to cause outrage and chaos in the coming year. Already they are breaking through with a blend of showmanship and original music that has not moved the public so much since the inauguration of the Woolwich ferry.'

– Chris Welch, *Melody Maker*



A track-by-track review of

TRESPASS

by Hugh Fielder

It's hard to believe, but when Genesis got together in the summer of 1970 to record *Trespass*, the average age of the band members was just twenty. They had already suffered the ignominy of watching their début release, the undistinguished *From Genesis to Revelation*, sink almost without trace, and survived the agonies of self-doubt and de-motivation which inevitably followed.

These were certainly difficult times for a band still struggling to gain recognition but, with a newly-acquired Mellotron, a contract with the up-and-coming Charisma label and the determination to succeed second time round, Genesis set to and produced *Trespass*, an often-overlooked but nonetheless important step in the overall development of progressive rock. While it's fair to say that *Trespass* falls some way short of classic status, they had successfully set aside the twee folk-rock of their earlier recordings to offer an album full of contrasts, with all the changes in mood and texture that would come to characterise not only Gabriel-era Genesis but prog-rock in general.

Lyrically, *Trespass* sometimes betrays the relative youth of the writers and, although some claim the album has a certain naïve charm, many more see this as an area of weakness. Musically, however, the band had made great strides while working on this release, and here they laid the foundation on which later glories were built. Sadly for drummer John Mayhew, this would be his swansong – as the band developed the material which appeared on *Trespass*, it became increasingly apparent to the others that their drummer was struggling to keep pace. Once the album was completed in July, Mayhew became the third drummer (after John Silver and Chris Stewart) to pass through the ranks. Phil Collins stepped into the breach early the following month.

In another upheaval, Genesis faced the second half of 1970 without guitarist Anthony Phillips, for whom the strain of live work simply became too much. Severe stage fright made it impossible for him to continue as a member of the band, and he quit around the same time as Mayhew was ousted.

Unlike the hapless drummer, Phillips had exerted an enormous influence on the sound of this album and would, through his eventual replacement Steve Hackett, continue to influence succeeding releases well into the 1970s. Hackett would certainly bring flavours of his own to the Genesis table, but he also seemed to have listened carefully to his predecessor, as Phillips' influence can clearly be heard in his successor's contributions on future albums.

Sombre in mood and far less keyboard-oriented than the albums that followed, *Trespass* was a skilfully-crafted, complex collection that deserved a better reception than it was afforded at the time and remains an under-valued album to this day.

Looking for Someone

With chilling vocals hovering like a hawk over an atmospheric organ backdrop, the opening bars of *Looking for Someone* start the album in a manner calculated to make the listener sit up and take notice. The story of one man's search for meaning and purpose in a confusing world is convincingly carried by one of the best early Peter Gabriel performances, possessing an emotional charge he has rarely bettered.

Ably assisted by sympathetic guitar work from Anthony Phillips and periodically driven along at a gallop by Mike Rutherford's fluid bass-playing and Tony Banks' relentless keyboards, the only real criticism of the album's opener is that its stop-start nature gives it a feeling of disjointedness which tends to negate its emotional impact.

As the song draws to a close, it bears a strong resemblance to the closing stages of 'The Return of the Giant Hogweed' from the *Nursery Cryme* album, the first of many passages on *Trespass* which,

in hindsight, can be seen to point the way forward. Curiously bleak and largely understated, *Looking For Someone* is a clear indication of what can be expected over the following 35 minutes.

White Mountain

With more than a nod to their earlier style, *White Mountain* alternates between a delicate backdrop of twelve-string and acoustic guitars interlaced with simple keyboards, and a slightly heavier, faster section driven by keyboards and percussion. Over this, Gabriel tells the story of a lone wolf whose sins against his society lead to his ostracism and eventual downfall.

Looked at in isolation, the words veer far too close to *Call of the Wild* territory and it would be hard to describe this as one of the album's lyrical highlights. There's a certain immaturity about these lines, and a sense of contrivance not helped in the least by a plodding, heavy-handed musical backdrop presumably designed to emphasise the voice of authority towards the end of the song.

Coupled with the curious outbreak of strangely tuneless whistling which precedes the closing section, these weaknesses make *White Mountain* one of the album's least successful tracks, although the initial verse and chorus sections are pleasant enough.

Visions of Angels

Graced with an extraordinarily pretty opening section, in which keyboards and guitars weave a delicate web to entangle the listener before Gabriel's voice brings in an equally delicate melody, *Visions of Angels* is a distinct improvement over its predecessor. There are powerful choruses, and an emotional climax as Gabriel once more seeks answers to life's imponderables, this time wrestling with the complexities of unfulfilled love.

Trespass tends to be a rather bleak album, imbued with a sense of futility and loss of direction. The search for the meaning of life in *Looking for Someone* is here replaced by a similar search for the

meaning of love. Written by Anthony Phillips, reputedly about Peter Gabriel's then girlfriend (and soon to be wife) Jill, *Visions of Angels* is another somewhat downbeat song which offers no easy answers. In the face of unrequited love, the song's protagonist then turns his attention to the question of whether God exists, speaking of a 'god no-one can reach', and of how 'some believe that when they die they really live'. His conclusion that 'God gave up the world... long ago' gives a fair indication of the depth of his despair, and Gabriel turns in another fine performance to give the song considerable emotional depth.

One can only guess as to whether he had any idea of the song's real meaning at the time...

Stagnation

The concept of life after a nuclear holocaust was a popular theme for writers from Hiroshima until the end of the Cold War, although its currency has now been replaced by the twin demons of terrorism and global warming. *Stagnation* is Genesis' entry in the genre, looking at the isolation suffered by the last survivor of the human race, a man whose curious decision to live far below the ground proved a blessing and curse when the world and its people were destroyed by nuclear weaponry.

The song is about Thomas S. Eiselberg, a very rich man who was wise enough to spend his entire fortune in burying himself many miles beneath the ground. As the only surviving member of the human race, he inherited the whole world. His story is one of the high spots of *Trespass*, with Gabriel delivering a spine-tingling, if rather subdued vocal over another shimmering backdrop of keyboards and guitars. Tony Banks takes the eerie subject matter as the starting point for some suitably unsettling synthesiser work, bending and twisting notes in a way previously unheard.

There are some criticisms – there is a truly awful edit as we go into the second verse, and the finale is a touch confused, but *Stagnation*

allows Gabriel to give full reign to his anguish. Had *The Knife* not been on *Trespass*, this would undoubtedly have been its best track.

Dusk

A simple folk-rock song with another set of lyrics that smacks of high-school poetry. Pretty enough, but a definite throwback to the band's earlier style that sits uneasily among the more experimental material making up the majority of the album.

A rather long-winded musing on the frailty of life and inevitability of death, *Dusk* suffers from a curious vocal styling that Genesis would wisely avoid in future. And, while their next album, *Nursery Cryme*, also featured a simpler song in *For Absent Friends*, the later piece was far more in keeping with the band's new-found style.

The Knife

A tour de force that featured in the band's live performances for years afterwards and represents the zenith of their achievements at this point in their career. Aggressive, menacing, manic and stunningly self-assured, this was the masterpiece that really broke Genesis and kick-started their career.

There's an intense anger to this song which Genesis failed to recapture fully until they recorded *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*, and the only weak link here is John Mayhew, whose drumming sounds too tentative – in all probability, it was Mayhew's performance on this number more than any other that sealed his fate. In Collins' hands, live renditions of *The Knife* would achieve their full potential, and it was easy to see why the remaining members of the group had identified him as the right man for the job.

Elsewhere, Mike Rutherford's dense, distorted fuzz-bass and Anthony Phillips' driving lead guitar power the album's closing track to its triumphant conclusion, while Tony Banks pulls out all the stops to flesh out the sound. Above it all, snarling and spitting, Peter Gabriel turns in another fine performance, and the vocal treatments

used to heighten the central character's revolutionary rhetoric are chillingly effective. With its suitably militaristic finale, *The Knife* was the sound of Genesis preparing for their march to glory...

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Although Gabriel later became a huge star, his diffident personality and developed sense of manners hid much of the starlight when the singer was off stage. The results can be seen in this early piece from *Melody Maker* published on 23 January 1971 in which a bemused staff writer met the man Tony Stratton-Smith of Charisma was championing as 'the next big thing'. Gabriel may be many things – but Mick Jagger is certainly not one of the front men who springs instantly to mind when comparisons are called for:

'The record label boss was quite ecstatic over him (Gabriel). "He has a touch of evil about him when he gets onstage", says Tony Stratton-Smith "He almost reminds me of Jagger at times. Or maybe Jim Morrison? Lou Reed? No? Er um... Well, then Iggy Stooge. Wrong again, huh. The truth is, he doesn't look much of a charismatic figure off stage. Like, he's sitting in this office while we're talking and he's wearing this shapeless sweater and nondescript slacks; an anxious, painful little smile keeps flickering across his face, and every time you ask him a question he looks at this other guy, another member of the band, as if he wants to be reassured that he is not talking out of turn."

He is a most unlikely pop star is Peter Gabriel, but then pop stars are most unlikely people. Maybe "star" is an unlikely word to use about him. Gabriel is lead vocalist with Genesis, a five piece band who last year produced *Trespass*, an album which, in its lyrical depth and flawless technique, constituted a minor masterpiece. His vocals are among the best things on the album: with an expressive hoarseness but mostly steeped throughout in a desperate romanticism, reaching out for something that he can't quite grasp.

The band essentially began in 1966 as four songwriters, Gabriel, Tony Banks, Michael Rutherford and Anthony Phillips. Some of their demo tapes were heard by Jonathan King and they got a contract with a record company, whence their releases disappeared into oblivion. "Fame and fortune somehow evaded this merry combo," their press handout puts it whimsically. Since then they have run the whole group gamut: the country cottage, the Soho hustlers, the big evanescent promises. They found a friendly soul in Stratton-Smith, however, the Matt Busby of the record business, who signed them to his recently-formed Charisma label. Under his avuncular direction they are achieving a growing reputation as one of the country's "thinking" bands.

Over the four years the personnel has altered, not surprisingly, with Phil Collins, (ex-Flaming Youth) on drums, and Mick Barnard, (formerly of a band called Farm), replacing Phillips on lead. I said that from their album they seemed very much a studio band. Some critics had even suggested that *Trespass* was essentially the creation of its producer, John Anthony. Gabriel's response was swift, "I don't agree, it's not a producer's album." He then paused a while. "I think he did a good job, a very good job, but it's always a compromise. There was very little that we didn't want done in the studio. We look on him as another member of the band, rather than the one with all the power, the one who dictates what we want and what we don't want. The group did all the arrangements and we considered the type of sound we wanted before we went into the studio. All the arrangements on *Trespass* were our own, and very much worked out beforehand, but John Anthony, who produced us, is very good with people and he seemed to get the best out of us. I mean, we all have strong opinions as to how the numbers should be played, and he acted as mediator as well. Looking back, I see lots of areas for improvement, but I still like the album. I think *Stagnation* is the best number, but I don't think it came across too well; what we'd like is a more romantic and personal approach with our next one."

'[Peter Gabriel] has a touch of evil about him when he gets onstage… The truth is, he doesn't look much of a charismatic figure off stage. Like, he's sitting in this office while we're talking and he's wearing this shapeless sweater and nondescript slacks; an anxious, painful little smile keeps flickering across his face, and every time you ask him a question he looks at this other guy, another member of the band, as if he wants to be reassured that he is not talking out of turn."

– Tony Stratton-Smith

So was Peter pleased with the outcome? "I don't think people are ever really satisfied are they? By the time the album comes out the original conception has gone. You lose a part everywhere. The stage it is at its fullest is in your head, and you lose all along the line from there. Personally, I think some of the songs were too long. We started very ambitious but also with straightforward melodies. We take music and work around that as a piece not as a song. With the addition of Phil and Mick it's made me more rhythm conscious."'

The *Melody Maker* writer then moved on to cover some uncomfortable ground with a series of probing questions concerning their recent debacle on BBC2, when the band had given its first television performance. Sadly this particular piece of footage has long since disappeared but the group were certainly not too disappointed to see it go:

'The band had a spot not long before on *Disco 2*, which was fairly disastrous. What had been the reason for that?

"Well" says Gabriel, "I've always got an idea of what the songs should sound like, but John (Anthony) is our cohesive force. Left to ourselves, as we were on television, we were a drag with insufficient technical knowledge. As a band we'll always need a producer. On that show the backing track was the same as the album but I did the vocal on top and I was very nervous on that occasion. I don't want to do TV again for a long time. It was a shocking performance and I'm not trying to excuse it. I'm just not an animal, a performing animal being put through his tricks, that's how the sound engineer saw it. You should have a say in shows like that. You should have some control like you do with an album sleeve. We're not performers to be manipulated by those people. I think the BBC has a condescending attitude to pop and pop musicians. It's only entertainers who are required to give a good performance every night, to put on a show. To try and get a BBC producer to understand what you want to do in a programme... the whole problem is that they don't believe the intricacies of sound balance make a difference to us. They think it's a

fuss about nothing. When we first went out on the road we thought we'd just get the music out and play behind a black curtain, but it wasn't working out. So we have to perform a bit, but it's now just as a means to an end, to get the music across."

He paused, clenched his hands together and smiled. "I see the band as sad romantics, you see," he said quietly.'

It was Gabriel who was increasingly seen as the front man and in consequence it was he that was summoned for such interview duties like that for *Zig Zag* magazine which was keen to discover how the fledgling stars were doing. At that stage in their development the band really needed all the publicity it could get and Gabriel of course was more than happy to oblige, giving the magazine all the detail it needed:

'At the moment, we're doing a lot of Charisma-promoted tours, but it would be nice if we could have more time to sit down and work out some new material. I suppose that ideally, we'd like to concentrate on quieter type music – a concert type group – but it would be just as good if we could be free to work on our music through the week and then go out and play it at the weekends, or some arrangement like that... I'm quite sure we could get the music to a much higher standard in a very short time if we had the opportunity to do this. But we still have it a lot cushier than other bands in our position, say, five years ago. Before we went on the road, when we were on the point of turning professional, we used to spend about three days on the lyrics to one song, but now it's often done about two hours before we record it. The words to *Knife*, for instance, were done the night before we recorded it. But even in the early days we used to feel that we were rushing things, though we struggled on playing how we wanted to play, and then King Crimson appeared on the scene, and we thought they were just magnificent; doing the same kind of things that we wanted to, but so much bigger and better. And we used to think, "they'd never allow themselves to be rushed... why do we?" And we built Crimson up into giant mythical proportions inside our

heads, because they were putting our ideals into practice – musically, and in the way they were being handled.'

Throughout his career Peter Gabriel has remained focused on the commercial aspects of the music business and in the early days this led to some very frank exchanges which gave the *Zig Zag* reader an unexpected glimpse into the inner workings of the band right down to its precarious finances.

'We've still got some very large debts,' said Gabriel, 'and we also owe Charisma a lot which we're paying back from gigs and records – it's their risk. We get paid fifteen pounds a week each and I don't think it will go up for maybe a year – and we had such an advance that I don't think we'll see any royalties until maybe the fourth album. As far as gigs go, Stratton is very enthusiastic about organising our affairs – for instance, this tour we've just completed would have been beyond our wildest dreams a year ago, but now it seems more natural. Audience reception varies, and we seem to reach peaks within the band... but every so often we have to go on and play when the music is really stagnant – when we should be locking ourselves away in rehearsal instead of doing gigs. We often get very tired of playing, but if we get a new number into the act, the others seem to become rejuvenated. We used to have a very idealised picture of how we'd get our music across, but just sitting down, very relaxed, and singing quietly to someone on the other side of a sitting room is hardly comparable to a live gig, we found. But you can always tell when the power is there... I don't know, someone suggested that if music is good enough it will stand on its own feet and come across on its own, but that's not true really – for instance, you'd be surprised how much difference it made when I started to wiggle about a bit, instead of just standing still.

We've had two new lead guitarists in the last two months and we've had to rehearse a lot, but this latest one is permanent we hope... he came to us through a *Melody Maker* ad and seems to fit in very well'.

Again we have no contemporary take on the *Trespass* album from Barbara Charone over at *NME*, but in the company of Tony

'*Trespass* is a beautifully constructed album, one of the best examples of mood combinations I have heard within the classical rock formula.'

– *Music Scene* magazine

Banks and Mike Rutherford she did revisit *Trespass* for the paper in the mid-seventies and was complimentary about the album which has resolutely maintained a place in the affections of Genesis fans. *Trespass* did not set the heather on fire in sales terms but it did do ten times better than *From Genesis to Revelation* selling over 6000 copies on its initial run, proving that there was definitely an audience for the band outside the immediate circle of friends and family.

Its warm place in history is reflected in Barbara's enthusiasm for the album:

'*Trespass* was integral to the group's growth for several reasons. For one, the album featured what is to this day considered a Genesis classic, *The Knife*, a superb example of pent-up aggression and futuristic violence. The cover was the first of many animated visual musings, coupled with similar lyrics, it contributed heavily to the drug culture myth which followed the band with the same plague-like determination that made disbelievers mumble "pretentious" at the first sound of a wandering Mellotron. Aided by numerous treks round Britain, the cult began to grow.'

'We lost money in those early days refusing to support,' Rutherford recalls fondly. 'It's taken a long time but now I'm glad we did it that way. In the very early days when we were supporting we'd go down well because people would expect nothing of you.'

Trespass was a beginning although the band continued to pursue its long range goals with some hesitation and doubt. The real breakthrough arrived with personnel changes. Driven by an inbuilt fear of success and its problematical traumas, founder member Anthony Philips left the group, subsequently received a musical degree from university and began to teach music as well as private guitar lessons. At the same time drummer John Mayhew left, leaving Genesis with two holes in need of plugging.'

Ron Ross was another journalist who would ultimately have a huge bearing on Genesis' fortunes in later years, but even he missed out on the initial launch of the *Trespass* album. It wasn't until 1975 in this

excellent piece for Phonographic Record that Ron was able to place the album in context of the other releases:

'Produced by John Anthony, who would go on to record any number of nouveau psychedelic groups as well as Queen, *Trespass* consists in large part of mellow, atmospheric tone poems featuring Phillips' and Rutherford's acoustic guitars and Gabriel's reedy voice. Even more however, Banks' Mellotron was a distinctive element, employed more tastefully than one would imagine possible give the Moodies' abuse of the instrument. The outstanding song is *The Knife*, which remained in the Genesis concert repertoire as an encore until very recently. With lyrics like: "Now in this ugly world, it is time to destroy all this evil. Now, when I give you the word, are you ready to fight for your freedom?" Or, "Some of you are going to die, martyrs of course to the freedom that I shall provide", *The Knife* gallops dramatically toward a violent climax.

This final track on their second album establishes several of Genesis' most persistent themes so directly that they could come from the mouth of Rael five albums later. "Promise me all of your violent dreams/Light up your body with anger." Gabriel's persona demands. The ironic connection between violence, heroism, and freedom is one Genesis will explore humorously on *Nursery Cryme*, socially on *Selling England by the Pound* and most comprehensively on *The Lamb*. Meanwhile some time after *Trespass*, Phil Collins came in on drums and vocals, while Steve Hackett joined as guitarist.'

Over at *Music Scene* magazine the reviewer was equally positive as can be seen from the enthusiastic response to this mid seventies retrospective review of the work of Genesis. The writer was particularly concerned with the construction of Gabriel's lyrics which had not yet begun to occupy the central position which they later commanded once the band really hit the big time:

'*Trespass* is a beautifully constructed album, one of the best examples of mood combinations I have heard within the classical rock formula. The contrast lies not only in the music but in the lyrics

which have been chosen for their sonic as well as their literary values. Two good examples appear from *Stagnation* and *White Mountain*. In *Stagnation*, the first verse leads in with the lively "here today..." following with a slow introduction to the second verse, "wait there", the whole song being pitted with long vowel sounds "is still time for washing in the pool, wash away the past/moon my long lost friend is smiling from above. Smiling at my tears.'

Compare this with *White Mountain*'s words on the other side with its widely differing chipped vowels which work the mouth and the mind towards the image.

'thin hung the web like a trap in a cage
the fox lay asleep in his lair
fangs frantic paws told the tale of his sin
far off the case shrieked revenge...'

The band really hit its musical stride in 1970 with *Trespass* which the group treated as the de-facto first album by Genesis. This was the first album which carried all of the hallmarks of the classic Genesis sound.

The advantages of a genteel education at a fine public school however count for very little in the rock and roll jungle. You can be born with a spoon of purest silver in your mouth but you still have to flog your way round the pubs and clubs. The dispiriting life of travelling around in a Transit van playing to tiny, often uninterested audiences quickly took its toll on Anthony Philips.

Anthony soon discovered that the rock 'n' roll life style was very far from glamorous and was clearly not for him. He seems to have suffered from a combination of stage fright and ennui brought on by the unedifying prospect of playing the same material night after night. Anthony bailed out of the band at the same time as a decision was taken that a stronger drummer was required."

Eventually, the remaining members rallied and renewed their commitment to Genesis, also deciding to sack drummer John Mayhew in the bargain. Phil Collins joined the band late in August

of 1970 and the band played a handful of gigs as a four-piece band before (briefly) hiring Mick Barnard to fill in on guitar.

While the band was becoming aware that Barnard was not up to their calibre of musicianship they continued to seek out his replacement. Late in 1970 Steve Hackett placed an ad in *Melody Maker* that was answered by Peter Gabriel. After an in-home audition with Hackett's brother John accompanying him on flute, Gabriel famously hired Hackett on the spot.

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Genesis were now firmly on the road to stardom, but a long journey lay ahead of them. Join us in the next issue to continue the Genesis story in *Music Legends Special Editions – Nursery Cryme*.

GENESIS

THE EARLY YEARS

MUSIC LEGENDS